

**Regulatory Compliance and Educational Quality Inspection Reports**

**The Oxford Montessori Schools**

**January 2020**



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### School's Details

<b>School</b>	The Oxford Montessori Schools		
<b>DfE number</b>	931/6119		
<b>Address</b>	The Oxford Montessori Schools Forest Farm School Elsfield Oxford Oxfordshire OX3 9VW		
<b>Telephone number</b>	01865 352062		
<b>Email address</b>	admin@oxfordmontessori.co.uk		
<b>Principal</b>	Mrs Katie Townsend		
<b>Proprietors</b>	Mrs Judith Walker Mr Daniel Ardizzone		
<b>Age range</b>	2 to 16		
<b>Number of pupils on roll</b>	107		
	<b>EYFS</b>	46	<b>Juniors</b> 25
	<b>Seniors</b>	36	
<b>Inspection dates</b>	28 to 30 January 2020		

## 1. Background Information

### About the school

- 1.1 Founded in 1990, Oxford Montessori Schools consist of a co-educational day and nursery school, Forest Farm, in the village of Elsfield, for pupils aged from 2 to 16 years and a nursery at Wolvercote, on the outskirts of Oxford, providing an Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) setting for children aged 2 to 5 years. At the main site, Forest Farm, which opened in 2000, pupils are taught in three departments: nursery, primary and seniors. The school is owned and administered by its two proprietors in a limited partnership and led by a separate principal. Since the previous inspection, the school has merged its nursery setting in central Oxford with the setting at Forest Farm and a new principal has been appointed.

### What the school seeks to do

- 1.2 The school aims to promote the development of the whole child through individual pastoral and academic support, equipping them with essential skills through learning that nurtures creativity and a connection to nature. By facilitating active, inquiry-based learning, the school seeks to reflect the Montessori ethos of education in which pupils are encouraged to contribute their views and make informed decisions about their own learning.

### About the pupils

- 1.3 Pupils come from a range of mostly professional family backgrounds in and around Oxford. The school's own assessment indicates that the ability of the pupils is broadly average in the junior school and below average in the senior school. The school has identified across its two sites 39 pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), all of whom receive additional support for a range of learning and emotional disorders, which include dyslexia and dyspraxia. There are five pupils who have an educational, health and care (EHC) plan. The school has identified four pupils for whom English is an additional language (EAL), none of whom require additional support. Data used by the school have identified seven pupils as being the most able in the school's population, and the curriculum is modified for them.

## 2. Regulatory Compliance Inspection

### Preface

The registration authority for independent schools is the Department for Education (DfE), which directs inspection according to a specified frequency or at any time where the DfE has particular concerns about a school. The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is the body approved by the Secretary of State for the purpose of inspecting schools which are, or whose heads are, in membership of the associations which form the Independent Schools Council (ISC) and reporting on the extent to which they meet the Independent School Standards ('the standards') in the Schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014. Accordingly, inspection records whether the school meets each of these standards, which are arranged in eight Parts, each of which is divided into separate paragraphs. The inspection of schools that have early years settings not requiring registration similarly records whether the school complies with key provisions of the Early Years Foundation Stage statutory framework, and for registered settings the full range of the Early Years Foundation Stage provisions is considered. Additionally, the inspection reports on the school's accessibility plan under Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010 and the ban on corporal punishment under section 548 of the Education Act 1996. It comments on the progress made by the school in meeting the compliance action points set out in the school's most recent statutory inspection.

All association independent schools will have an inspection within three years from April 2016, in accordance with the Framework and DfE requirements. The inspection may be of COMPLIANCE ONLY or a combined inspection of EDUCATIONAL QUALITY AND COMPLIANCE depending on a number of factors, including findings from their most recent inspection. Schools judged not to meet the standards may also be subject to a progress monitoring visit before their next routine inspection. The progress monitoring visit will judge whether the school has taken the necessary action to meet any un-met standards identified at their previous inspection.

The inspection was also carried out under the arrangements of the ISC Associations for the maintenance and improvement of the quality of their membership.

**This is a REGULATORY COMPLIANCE INSPECTION which was combined with an inspection of EDUCATIONAL QUALITY, the report of which appears later in this document. The COMPLIANCE inspection reports only on the school's compliance with the standards.** The standards represent minimum requirements and judgements are given either as **met** or as **not met**. All schools are required to meet all the standards applicable to them. Where the minimum requirements are not met, this is clearly indicated in the relevant section of the report and the school is required to take the actions specified.

Inspections do not include matters that are outside of the regulatory framework described above, such as: an exhaustive health and safety audit; compliance with data protection requirements; an in-depth examination of the structural condition of the school, its services or other physical features; contractual arrangements with parents; an investigation of the financial viability of the school or its accounting procedures.

Inspectors may be aware of individual safeguarding concerns, allegations and complaints as part of the inspection process. Such matters will not usually be referred to specifically in published reports in this document but will have been considered by the team in reaching its judgements.

Links to the full regulations and requirements can be found here: [The Education \(Independent School Standards\) Regulations 2014](#), [Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework](#).

## Key findings

- 2.1 The school meets almost all of the required standards in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, and relevant requirements of the statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage, and associated requirements. In order to meet all the standards, the school should take immediate action to remedy the deficiencies as detailed below.**

### **PART 1 – Quality of education provided**

- 2.2 In the junior school, the school uses its own framework to determine attainment, instead of the national framework.
- 2.3 Pupils take GCSE examinations in their final year at the school. The small numbers involved prevent reliable comparison with national averages.
- 2.4 The curriculum is documented, supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work for the pupils and covers the required breadth of material. The teaching enables pupils to make good progress, encompasses effective behaviour management and is supported by suitable resources. A suitable framework for the assessment of pupils' performance is in place.
- 2.5 The standards relating to the quality of education [paragraphs 1-4] are met.**

### **PART 2 – Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils**

- 2.6 Principles and values are actively promoted which facilitate the personal development of pupils as responsible, tolerant, law-abiding citizens.
- 2.7 The standard relating to spiritual, moral, social and cultural development [paragraph 5] is met.**

### **PART 3 – Welfare, health and safety of pupils**

- 2.8 Arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils by means that pay due regard to current statutory guidance; good behaviour is promoted; bullying is prevented so far as reasonably practicable; health and safety requirements are met, including those relating to fire safety; provision is made for first aid. Pupils are properly supervised; admission and attendance registers are maintained, as required, and there is a strategic approach to risk assessment. A disability access plan is in place.
- 2.9 The standards relating to welfare, health and safety [paragraphs 6–16], the requirement of Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010, and the ban on corporal punishment under section 548 of the Education Act 1996 are met.**

### **PART 4 – Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors**

- 2.10 The school makes appropriate checks to ensure the suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors, and a register is kept as required.
- 2.11 The standards relating to the suitability of those in contact with pupils at the school [paragraphs 17–21] are met.**

### **PART 5 – Premises of and accommodation at schools**

- 2.12 Suitable toilet and changing facilities, and showering facilities where required by the standard, and appropriate accommodation for pupils' medical and therapy needs are provided. The premises are maintained to a standard commensurate with health and safety; acoustics and lighting are

appropriate; water provision is adequate. Suitable outdoor space is provided for physical education and outdoor play.

**2.13 The standards relating to the premises and accommodation [paragraphs 22–31] are met.**

## **PART 6 – Provision of information**

2.14 A range of information is variously published, provided or made available to parents, inspectors and the Department for Education. This includes details about the proprietor, the ethos of the school and the curriculum, and of the school’s arrangements for admission, behaviour and exclusions, bullying, health and safety, first aid, details of the complaints procedure, and the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year, and the provision for any with education, health and care plans or English as an additional language. It also includes particulars of the school’s academic performance during the preceding school year, inspection reports and (for parents only) a report at least annually of their own child’s progress. The safeguarding policy is posted on the school’s website.

**2.15 The standard relating to the provision of information [paragraph 32] is met.**

## **PART 7 – Manner in which complaints are handled**

2.16 The school has an appropriate policy for handling parental complaints which has a three stage process, (informal, formal and a hearing before a panel of three, one of whom is independent of the school). Each stage has clear time scales, and at the third stage the panel can make findings and recommendations which are communicated to the complainant.

2.17 The policy has not been consistently implemented. The school has not always responded to formal complaints within the timescales stated in its procedure. It has not kept appropriate records of formal complaints or of any actions taken, whether or not the complaint has been upheld.

**2.18 The standards relating to the handling of complaints in sub-paragraphs (a–b) (d–i) and (k) are met but those in subparagraphs (c) and (j) [clear timescales and written records] are not met.**

### **Action point 1**

- **The school must ensure that it implements the timescale stated in its policy for the management of formal complaints [paragraph 33(c); EYFS 3.74]**

### **Action point 2**

- **The school must ensure that written records are kept of all formal complaints, whether they are resolved following a formal process or proceed to a panel hearing; and of action taken as a result of the complaints, regardless of whether they are upheld [paragraph 33(j); EYFS 3.74]**

## **PART 8 – Quality of leadership in and management of schools**

2.19 The proprietor ensures that the leadership and management demonstrate good skills and knowledge, and fulfil their responsibilities effectively, so that the other standards are consistently met, and they actively promote the well-being of the pupils.

**2.20 The standard relating to leadership and management of the school [paragraph 34] is met.**

### 3. Educational Quality Inspection

#### Preface

The **EDUCATIONAL QUALITY** inspection reports on the quality of the school's work. It focuses on the two key outcomes:

- The achievement of the pupils, including their academic development, and
- The personal development of the pupils.

Since the school was last inspected, the framework for inspection has changed. The current inspection framework uses different criteria and arrangements for grading from those used in previous inspection frameworks. The judgements made on this inspection are, therefore, not directly comparable to judgements made on previous inspections.

All independent schools are required to meet the requirements of the Independent School Standards. However, different inspectorates apply different frameworks that are suited to the different types of schools they inspect. The ISI terminology reflects quality judgements that are at least equivalent to those used by the national inspectorate, Ofsted. ISI reports do not provide a single overarching judgement for the school but instead give a clear judgement about key outcomes for pupils and information on the quality of the school's work.

**The headline judgements must include one of the ISI descriptors 'excellent', 'good', 'sound' or 'unsatisfactory'.**

Where necessary, National Curriculum nomenclature is used to refer to year groups in the school. Where the school's own names differ from those used nationally, the details are given in the table below:

<i>School name</i>	<i>National Curriculum name</i>
Primary	Years 3 to 6
Seniors	Years 7 to 11



## Key findings

- 3.1 The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements is good.
- Pupils demonstrate excellent communication skills.
  - All pupils make good progress and those with SEND make excellent progress.
  - Pupils collaborate enthusiastically and productively in lessons.
  - Pupils throughout the school have positive attitudes to learning.
  - Pupils' development of a wider range of skills is limited by the small number of opportunities to extend them outside the classroom.
- 3.2 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- Pupils make excellent decisions when taking charge of their learning.
  - Pupils have a clear sense of right and wrong, as reflected in their excellent behaviour.
  - Pupils develop strong and mature relationships with staff and their peers.
  - Pupils' awareness of how to stay safe and healthy is very strong.
  - Pupils are extremely self-aware but feedback and marking does not always indicate clearly how they can improve their work.

## Recommendations

- 3.3 The school is advised to make the following improvements:
- Extend pupils' skills and experience by providing a broader extra-curricular programme.
  - Ensure that the quality of marking and feedback is consistently high so that pupils know how to improve their work.

## The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements

- 3.4 The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements is good.
- 3.5 Pupils have excellent communication skills. They engage enthusiastically in discussion and express their views confidently, as seen in the pupil parliament where they offered ideas about a forthcoming residential trip. In the EYFS, pupils were confident to join in stories and rhymes using actions and facial expressions to suit the mood of the stories. Pupils' natural openness and willingness to discuss ideas are fostered by the excellent and close relationships between staff and pupils at all levels in the school. Pupils are also excellent listeners, both to staff and to their peers when working together in lessons. For example, older senior pupils shared their reactions to current news items in English and were able to reflect critically and adapt their own opinions having listened carefully to the views of others. Pupils throughout the school, including those with SEND, display strong reading and written communication skills. Junior pupils used exciting vocabulary to compose a persuasive letter and senior pupils were able quickly and accurately to identify and correct mistakes in a text. Skilful and supportive teaching staff and the availability of individual one-to-one help contribute significantly to the successful development of pupils' communication skills.
- 3.6 Pupils of all ages achieve good and sometimes excellent levels of knowledge, skills and understanding. The oldest pupils display excellent higher order skills of analysis and evaluation such as in an English lesson where they readily evaluated the likely impact of their writing on the audience. In science, older pupils recalled with accuracy their previous work on photosynthesis and junior pupils showed a thorough knowledge and understanding of a topic on chocolate, creatively linking a number of cross-

curricular themes. Pupils ask perceptive questions to deepen their understanding and expand their knowledge and are encouraged to do so by teaching which seeks to link ideas across a range of subjects. For example, older junior pupils used their good knowledge of the Vikings to explore through precise questioning how boats, buildings and clothes are made. The core curriculum of English, mathematics, and science ensures that all pupils develop appropriate key skills for their ages in these areas but pupils' experiences of the creative, aesthetic and physical elements of the curriculum are more limited and their skills are less well-developed in these areas. In response to the pre-inspection questionnaires all parents agreed that the school helps their child to develop skills for the future and most pupils indicated that the school encourages them to think and learn for themselves.

- 3.7 Pupils take some GCSE examinations in their final year but the small numbers involved prevent reliable comparisons with national averages. In the junior school pupils' progress is assessed in ways that reflect the ethos of the school, which is to allow children to progress at their natural rate of development rather than reach expected age-related levels. The evidence from lesson observations, interviews with pupils and the scrutiny of their work matches the school's data in showing that most pupils make good progress from their individual starting points after joining the school. This highlights the positive influence of the school's leadership in promoting a non-competitive approach to measuring pupils' progress and development. Those with SEND and EAL make excellent progress, being helped to fulfil their potential through the highly effective support they receive, which is documented in the comprehensively prepared individual learning plans. The majority of the youngest children complete the EYFS successfully at a level at least in line with national expectations for their age. In the questionnaires, all parents and most pupils agreed that the teaching helps them to learn and make progress.
- 3.8 Pupils demonstrate good and sometimes excellent numeracy skills. They have a strong grasp of basic numerical principles and apply them confidently to solve problems. For example, younger junior pupils accurately calculated the total cost of ingredients for a recipe and older junior pupils showed strong mental arithmetic skills when estimating answers and solving problems. Senior pupils have a good grasp of basic mathematical functions and develop their confidence in numeracy through highly structured and individually focused programmes of study as they progress towards GCSE or a functional maths qualification. This increasing confidence enables pupils to use their mathematical skills across other subjects, such as in art where younger pupils in the senior school carefully used concepts of symmetry and proportion to aid their drawing. Similarly in science, older pupils were adept in using algebra to manipulate equations.
- 3.9 Pupils are confident, competent and enthusiastic users of ICT in and out of lessons. They are skilled in using commercial programmes to aid their learning, such as in Year 11 where pupils practise listening skills in Spanish using laptops. In Years 5 and 6 pupils used ICT creatively and independently in their topic work when researching the impact of wildfires on animals in Australia. Pupils with SEND use ICT effectively to support their learning and are guided expertly in lessons by teaching assistants. The positive impact of governance, leadership and management has been demonstrated recently in the provision of more ICT equipment throughout the school.
- 3.10 Most pupils are enthusiastic and well-motivated learners. Pupils of all abilities, including those with SEND, have high expectations of themselves and want to achieve their potential. In the questionnaires, a very large majority of pupils agreed that the school helps them to be confident and independent. This was seen in the senior school where pupils used study periods effectively to pursue independent research or to revisit previous work. Pupils enjoy collaborating in lessons and work well together. For example, younger senior school pupils combined effectively to develop a group understanding of how to identify the use of the iambic pentameter in various texts and, in the EYFS, pupils co-operated well as they explored new areas of shared activity. Pupils' positive attitudes are fostered by the nurturing approach of staff, who tailor their teaching to suit the particular needs and backgrounds of the pupils, especially in the senior school.

- 3.11 Pupils participate enthusiastically in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award (DofE) scheme and a number have been successful recently in external speaking and performance examinations. Pupils enjoy attending a small range of extra-curricular activities such as coding club, gymnastics club and, for younger pupils, a craft activity but because there is a narrow range of sporting or musical activities, it is harder for pupils to extend their skills and interests in these areas. Pupils eagerly embrace the opportunities to explore the extensive rural setting at Forest Farm, which fulfils the school's aim of encouraging pupils to develop a connection with nature.

### **The quality of the pupils' personal development**

- 3.12 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- 3.13 Pupils have an excellent level of self-understanding for their age. In the junior school, pupils exhibit high levels of appropriate self-esteem and are proud of their achievements. They eagerly collect 'stars' as commendations for good work and good behaviour and they are encouraged by staff to be aspirational and self-reflective. The continuity of teaching in the junior school, with pupils having the same teacher for two years, helps them build confidence and a sense of security. Pupils in the senior school, many of whom have had negative educational experiences before joining the school, recognize clearly their own strengths and weaknesses and share openly and warmly about how they are encouraged by staff to develop resilience and to grow in confidence. Pupils who spoke to the inspectors were keen to do well and wanted to improve their level of attainment. A small minority of pupils in the questionnaires felt that feedback and marking does not always help them to improve and inspectors agreed that the quality of written feedback on pupils' work is inconsistent and often lacks helpful comments. Senior pupils feel well prepared for the next phase in their lives and are assisted by staff to prepare a curriculum vitae (CV) and encouraged to discuss career options.
- 3.14 Pupils' enjoy making decisions and are empowered by the school to take an active lead in determining the course of their learning. In the EYFS, pupils make sensible decisions about whether to play inside or outside and when they want their snack. Junior pupils think carefully about the topics they would like to study and senior pupils, whilst having less choice, are still able to agree an appropriate programme of study to suit their needs and abilities. Pupils made wise and perceptive suggestions in the school parliament, having thought carefully about options for a residential trip. The leadership and management of the school is highly successful in promoting the school's aim of enabling children to contribute their views and make informed decisions about their learning.
- 3.15 Pupils have a good appreciation of the non-material aspects of life. They fully understand the school values of tolerance and trust and are encouraged to reflect on these in assemblies and tutor time. Pupils recognize and appreciate the natural beauty of the school's setting and some spoke of their love of nature and enjoyment of seeing wildlife and trees through the seasons. Others spoke maturely about how quiet times during the school day help them to be reflective and step back from routines. Pupils have a good awareness of other faiths, gained through the curriculum and visits to local places of worship but showed a shallower understanding of how art or music could help them to reflect on deeper issues.
- 3.16 Pupils' behaviour is excellent throughout the school. They understand clearly the difference between right and wrong and their awareness of moral and ethical issues is strong. Pupils value the 'Respect Code' of behaviour, which they helped to devise, and see it as an important standard to uphold. Equally, they value the school's policy of restorative justice to settle any disputes and to offer pupils the opportunity to reflect on how to change their behaviour. Pupils are unfailingly polite to adults and to each other from the EYFS upwards. Around school, pupils display good manners by holding doors open or helping to carry books. In lessons, pupils behave extremely well, often supporting each other in their learning. The excellent and relatively informal relationships between adults and pupils in the school help to create an atmosphere of calmness and actively promote the expectation of civilised behaviour. In the questionnaires a very large majority of parents felt that the school actively promotes good behaviour.

- 3.17 Pupils have a very strong sense of social awareness. In the EYFS children, helped by staff, show a growing understanding of how their choices impact on others. In the junior school, pupils co-operate well in and out of class. For example, in a Year 3 and 4 lesson, pupils worked purposefully together to self-edit their work and senior school pupils supported one another by reading through draft CVs and offering helpful comments for improvement. Older pupils willingly volunteer to help in the junior classes and senior pupils comment how, through participation in the DofE scheme, they have forged strong friendships and learned to co-operate effectively. In the questionnaires, most parents agreed that the school has helped their child to develop strong teamwork and social skills.
- 3.18 Pupils' commitment to social activity within the school community is strong. Senior pupils enjoy playing board games with junior pupils and there is a regular rota of pupil helpers who willingly volunteer to empty compost bins around the school. Pupils are environmentally aware and are keen to participate in the school's extensive tree-planting programme, benefiting from the positive impact of the proprietors' initiative to expand the woodland around the school. Junior pupils have a deeper understanding of homelessness as a result of a recent charity collection and senior pupils broaden their perspective on life through volunteering in charity shops and cafes.
- 3.19 Pupils are highly respectful of diversity within the school community and willing to engage sensitively and openly in discussion about issues of religion, gender and disability. In a Year 9 lesson, pupils showed a mature appreciation of issues in Judaism and other pupils showed a clear acceptance of diversity when watching a video clip involving people from different ethnic and regional backgrounds. In junior classes, pupils engage enthusiastically in creating displays to celebrate Chinese New Year and in EYFS pupils play happily with dolls of varying ethnicity, showing no preference in their choice. The tradition of school parliament promotes an active democracy within the school community and teaches pupils to accept and respect different points of view.
- 3.20 Pupils demonstrate an excellent understanding of how to lead a healthy lifestyle. They understand the importance of online safety and value the excellent personal, social, health and economic education (PSHEE) lessons that allow them to discuss any e-safety concerns honestly and freely. Pupils respect the school policy of handing in mobile phones on arrival and commented that it helps them feel safe in school. Junior school pupils display an acute awareness of how to stay safe and what makes a stranger and in EYFS pupils enjoy making their own snacks and show a growing awareness of what makes a healthy diet. In a cooking activity, pupils in the senior school confidently prepared a healthy vegetable quiche from only a few ingredients and spoke knowledgeably about a healthy lifestyle. Pupils understand the importance of physical exercise in staying fit and healthy and in the questionnaires, most pupils agreed that the school encourages them to follow a healthy lifestyle.

## 4. Inspection Evidence

- 4.1 The inspectors observed lessons, conducted formal interviews with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with members of staff and with the proprietors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended form meetings and assemblies. Inspectors visited the facilities for the youngest pupils, together with the learning support and educational resource areas. The responses of parents, staff and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined curriculum and other documentation made available by the school.

### Inspectors

Mr Stephen Holliday	Reporting inspector
Mrs Bridget Windley	Deputy reporting inspector
Mr David Edwards	Compliance Team inspector (Head, IAPS school)
Mrs Jane Stevens	Team inspector (Former deputy head, ISA school)
Mr David Bradbury	Team inspector (Head, ISA school)